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High-level segment

Statement submitted by Union Women's Center, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* The present statement is issued without formal editing.

16-08763 (E) 030616

Please recycle

Statement

Only when all individuals fully realize their human rights, including sexual rights can sustainable development be achieved. Georgia has carried out complex measures in this direction, including the legislative framework and implementation with active participation of civil society. Georgia adopted the Anti-Domestic Violence Law (2006), Anti-Trafficking Law (2006), Gender Equality Law and corresponding National Action plans and also the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security for implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 (2000). In 2013 a Gender Equality Department was established as a standing unit in the Public Defender's Office and from 2006, the work State Fund for Protection Victims of Domestic Violence and Trafficking. Georgia belongs to that group of countries were the ideology of gender equality and traditional attitudes are based on gender stereotypes.

Governments agreed that human rights includes the right to have control over and decide freely on all matters related to one's sexuality, free from coercion, discrimination and violence.

Attempts by others to control the sexuality of girls and women violate their human rights on a daily basis. These violations include sexual and gender-based violence, stigma and discrimination, limitations on mobility, and denial of meaningful participation in public life, among others. Furthermore, lesbians, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people, sex workers, and people living with HIV and AIDS face these and other profound violations of their human rights, simply because they are seen to transgress prevailing sexual, gender and other norms.

For young people and adolescents, especially those who belong to the most marginalized, vulnerable and stigmatized populations, many social and economic barriers continue to impede the full realization of their sexual rights. Non-judgmental, and youth-friendly sexual and reproductive health services and comprehensive sexuality education are essential to enable young people to challenge harmful gender norms, learn about and claim their rights and navigate healthy relationships.

It is clear: sexual rights underpin the enjoyment of all other human rights and are a prerequisite for equality, justice and sustainable development, including the rights to health, education, housing and employment. In many cases, sexual rights violations and discrimination based on sexuality compromise individuals' economic opportunities and lead to or exacerbate poverty.

Encouragingly, there is increasing recognition at the governmental level of the importance of sexual rights and the need to put in place laws and policies to protect them at the country level. Several countries have undertaken important legislative changes; and more countries are taking necessary steps to provide comprehensive sexuality education for all adolescents and youth. It is high time that our language and policies adapt to the realities and needs of young people.

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Statement submitted by Universal Esperanto Association, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council*

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Statement

The SDGs must embrace civil society.

"This 2030 agenda is for everyone everywhere," remarked Helen Clark, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator and former New Zealand Prime Minister. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), added Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway, constitute "the largest development dialogue the world has ever seen." "It is important to listen to the voices of the people," said Phan Binh Minh, Deputy Prime Minister of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam. Success depends not only on governments but also on those the governments serve — ordinary citizens holding governments accountable, helping where governments cannot.

The SDGs must involve listening as well as talking.

So the effort should involve everyone — in multilingual dialogue involving listening to the voices of the people rather than dictating solutions in the one-sided, top-down development process previously all too common in development circles.

The language dimension is largely absent from the SDGs.

While the talk is of dialogue, this does not translate into awareness of language both as process and as substance. The dimension of language is barely mentioned, and not at all in the seventeen SDGs themselves. "Dialogue" is conducted overwhelmingly in English, and to a lesser degree other major languages. Yet the people at whom the goals are directed — particularly goals addressing poverty, education, and literacy — often do not speak the languages of the policymakers. Some belong to language minorities with little voice in their own countries, and none in the wider world. "Use of local languages is inseparable from participatory development. Local people will not own development until they can discuss it among themselves and with outsiders without the barrier of someone else's language," says one language policy expert. Another adds: "International development exists inside language; we do not have international development without language."

Language lies at the very core of human communication.

Canadian scholar Mark Fettes analyzed the eighteen "think pieces" that the UN System Task Team published on the SDGs. Language appeared only four times in all eighteen documents, and then only linked with "indicators of diversity, inequality or discrimination," never as a factor in its own right. Yet language choice and language use have direct impact on the efficacy of political engagement, the effectiveness of education, legal processes, human rights. Language is often used to discriminate and disempower. It seems odd that people of goodwill should accord so little attention to the linguistic processes at the core of human communication.

The UN must pay greater attention to language in development.

Our Association is interested not only in promoting the International Language Esperanto but also in eliminating all forms of discrimination, including linguistic discrimination, and advancing all basic human rights, including linguistic rights. One of only a few NGOs primarily concerned with language issues, it is pursuing a

two-part strategy: first, using its worldwide network of Esperanto speakers to advance the SDGs, encouraging intervention with governments in their support; second, urging the United Nations to pay greater attention to language issues and recognize that effective communication and inclusive language policies go together.